

Jubilee State College

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Only a short westerly drive from Peoria resides a small college campus few people are aware of. One only has to visit the campus to see the beauty and feel the surrounding history of Jubilee State College. In addition to influencing other school's construction, Jubilee State College was the first boarding school in Illinois. Also, the school was one of the first rurally located schools. At its peak, there were more than 50 students attending various divisions of the school. Though the college is no longer open for classes, there is plenty for people to learn. As a result of Philander Chase's perseverance, Jubilee State College had an educational impact not only on the surrounding community, but the entire state of Illinois.

With the donated funds for Jubilee Sate College, the school was only able to stay open for a little over two decades; however, in this short amount of time the school was able to influence Illinois. Immediately after funds for the project of Jubilee College began to be gathered in 1838, Philander Chase began work on the layout of the school. Chase's plans were to create an economically self-sufficient educational community that would train young men and women. He believed that an isolated location would help promote the school's financial independence and allow him to better shape and control the students in a serene environment. Because these plans were carried out, Chase was able to open the first school of higher education in the Peoria area. Compared to other colleges at the time, Jubilee College was the only one placed in a rural environment. If students paid one hundred dollars in advance, they cover the costs for a single year term, making Jubilee one of the first schools in Illinois to set a high standard so future schools could have cheaper expenses. Even though this seemed like a good bargain, few students ever enrolled in the school.

Classes were held for the first time in 1840. Students enrolled in a theological department, boy's preparatory school, college for men, and a girl's school. Rather than the seminary school being most successful, which was Bishop Philander Chase's favored department, more students enrolled in the other aspects of the school. Even though his full intentions were never realized in practice, the school's college courses were highly effective. In 1847, five students entered the sacrament of Holy Orders, and nearly 800 people came to the school grounds. In the same year, five students were admitted to the college and granted Bachelor's degrees in the arts and science. This allowed community members a chance to see the school's potential, and a chance to see a local place where they could enroll. In fact, four theology students, forty preparatory students, and twelve young men in college courses attended the school in 1855. By this time, the girl's department had already shut down. Tremendous numbers of students began to enroll, and several other educational leaders at this time were inspired to create highly promising schools of higher education. Even so, the school gradually began to lose enrollment. In fact, because of low numbers of students and the Bishop's death, the school could not support itself, and it was completely shut.

After closing Bishop Philander Chase's school, several other organizations tried to use the school, but all failed as well. The surrounding environment was never as appealing to the people of that era, who were looking for a bustling cityscape instead of a tranquil release like Jubilee's college grounds.

Several very prominent students graduated from the Jubilee College. One was E. H. N. Patterson. He had imagined publishing a literary journal with Edgar Allen Poe as the editor and exchanged a number of letters with him. Before their business arrangements were finalized, however, Poe died. Patterson, nonetheless, went on to publish the Oquawka Spectator, a regional newspaper.

Throughout the years, Samuel Chase and the Bishop worked together with the school because of their admiration for one another and the thought of educating the

people of central Illinois. With the precedent of these two educational leaders, other people were persuaded to follow in their path, and open more successful schools. Had it not been for the pair, the school would not have touched the hearts of the central Illinois area, and encouraged others to create schools of their own.

From the store, print shop, L-shaped two-story frame boarding house, and several faculty homes that spread across nearly 4,000 acres in 1850, only the L-shaped building remains. In an effort for easier travel, more roads and paths have been constructed around the school. This allows more recent forms of transportation to serve throughout the area as a calm retreat from the city. If not for Chase's dedication, the park's numerous bike and hiking trails, picnic areas, and campsites would likely not be available. As well as hosting a Christmas Celebration in the chapel, the annual Olde English Faire is held at the college grounds.

Because of Philander Chase's drive to succeed, Jubilee State College influenced the state of Illinois. It was important in the creation of higher education facilities in Illinois. Philander Chase's legacy can still be seen today in the buildings and grounds of Jubilee State College, as well as through the influence of the people who had attended the school. [From Bill Adams, Yester Days; Philander Chase, Bishop Chase's Reminiscences; "Jubilee College State Park"

<http://www.historicpeoria.com/select.cfm?chase=96> (Sept. 7, 2005); Kenyon College, A Brief Biography of Philander Chase
<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Khistory/chase/biography/biography.htm/>. (Sept. 6, 2005); Student historian's interview with Joan Welton (former employee at Jubilee College historic site and current tour guide), Sept. 5, 2005.]